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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 001810

SIPDIS

WHITE HOUSE FOR APHSCT TOWNSEND

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SUBJECT: ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT TOWNSEND'S DECEMBER 2  
MEETING WITH KUWAITI SECURITY BUREAU PRESIDENT SHAIKH SABAH

Classified By: DCM Susan L. Ziadeh for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counter-Terrorism (APHSCT) Frances Fragos Townsend met with Kuwaiti National Security Bureau President Shaikh Sabah Khaled Al-Sabah December 2 on the margins of the IISS Gulf Security Dialogue conference in Manama. Shaikh Sabah expressed optimism about the involvement of Sunnis in the political process in Iraq, saying that both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait will have an opportunity to encourage the visiting Iraqi Sunni leadership in face-to-face meetings in the coming week. However, he voiced dismay with the new leadership in Iran, noting that progress on bilateral issues such as off-shore oil and gas had stagnated. He expressed Kuwait's concern about radicalized Kuwaiti youth receiving terrorist training in other countries and then returning home. Kuwait's advice to Syria has been to cooperate fully in the Mehliis investigation. He declared Kuwait's support for the Amman Declaration to be discussed at the upcoming Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) gathering in Mecca. End Summary.

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Elections in Iraq  
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2. (C) In a December 2 meeting with Kuwaiti Security Bureau President Shaikh Sabah Khaled Al-Sabah, APHSCT Townsend expressed USG appreciation for Kuwaiti efforts to reach out to Iraqi Sunni leaders to encourage participation in the December 15 Iraqi elections. Shaikh Sabah said that Saudi cooperation with Kuwait in encouraging Iraqi Sunni involvement has improved, as has direct communication with Iraqi Sunnis. Previously the Sunni leadership had been reluctant to talk with Kuwait directly and had only spoken through intermediaries. In the coming week, however, the Iraqi Sunni leadership will be traveling first to Saudi Arabia and then to Kuwait for direct consultations.

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Back to Square One with Iran  
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3. (C) Shaikh Sabah voiced Kuwaiti frustration with the new leadership in Iran. In the past four months, the Kuwaiti leadership met twice with Iranian President Ahmadinejad and with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohaki four times. There has been much talk, but only empty promises resulting in no bilateral progress between the two nations. They had begun discussions over disputed off-shore gas and oil reserves, but progress has stopped. Due to its proximity to Iran, Kuwait is concerned about Iran's nuclear ambitions and has expressed this concern to Iran. The Iranian response was that they had hired a Russian expert to oversee the Bushehr plant operations. Shaikh Sabah said that Kuwait was not comforted by this fact given the Russian experience at Chernobyl.

4. (C) APHSCT Townsend expressed concern that Iran is allowing al-Qaeda recruits' passage through Iran. Other nations, including Saudi Arabia, have tried to broach the subject with Iran, to no avail. Shaikh Sabah said that there are many al-Qaeda operatives in Iran moving freely and even assisted by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. He expressed Kuwait's concern about its own citizens traveling to neighboring countries to receive training in weapons and explosives, using this training in Iraq, and then returning to Kuwait to spread radicalism. The government knows of dozens of individuals, some of whom are in detention in Syria, and it expects the number to grow. Kuwait's requests for information about those detained in Syria have gone unanswered.

5. (C) Regarding the movement of money to fund terrorism, APHSCT Townsend said that Gulf countries must cooperate on the development of a strong law. The U.S. was encouraged by Saudi Arabia's recent move to lower the acceptable limits on money flowing in and out of the country, even though the move will likely be unpopular. Shaikh Sabah said Kuwait has been working on legislation, but that it still needs more work. Kuwait has taken technological precautions such as x-ray systems to monitor packages entering and exiting the country. These efforts notwithstanding, terrorists are adjusting; a pattern is emerging of individuals carrying smaller amounts

of cash and passing it to others by hand.

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Syria's Plea for Help  
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16. (C) Shaikh Sabah related that Syrian President Bashar al-Asad requested assistance from Kuwait in its dilemma over the Mehlis investigation into the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri. Kuwait's response was that the only acceptable action was to cooperate fully with the investigation. Kuwait has domestic concerns about a possible Syrian role in the assassination because of the potential reaction from the 90,000 Syrians resident in Kuwait. Shaikh Sabah said that al-Asad had promised cooperation with the investigation, but then made conflicting statements in the press. Kuwait is concerned about al-Asad's capability to lead and whether he can out-manuever the old guard around him. APHSCT Townsend stressed the USG position that isolating al-Asad from friends and neighbors will be most effective. (Note: Shaikh Sabah deflected the suggestion, appearing reluctant to commit to this strategy. End note.)

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Mecca OIC Meeting an Historic Opportunity  
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17. (C) APHSCT Townsend encouraged Kuwait to fully support the Amman Declaration at the December 7-8 meeting of the OIC hosted by Saudi Arabia in Mecca. Shaikh Sabah said that Kuwait is fully supportive and that tolerance is a key part of Kuwaiti policy and strategy to combat extremism. Kuwait has been working for a year to establish a center for mediation which Kuwait envisions as partly a training center for clerics, and partly a clearinghouse for information, including development of a database of Arabic terms used by terrorists to communicate with one another. Shaikh Sabah expressed an urgency to have today's youth educated properly so that their hearts and minds are not corrupted.

18. (U) APHSCT Townsend cleared this message.

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